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Inaugural Essay

On

Puerperal Fever.

For the degree of Doctor of Medicine

In the

University of Pennsylvania

By

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Among the various diseases that require the assistance of the medical profession, there is probably none that demand more decided and immediate aid, than the one under consideration; and in none does opinion differ to a greater extent than in this. It makes its attack almost immediately, or within a few days after delivery; and the uncommon quickness of the pulse; the painful soreness of the abdomen, and the distention of the cavity which attends after a short time; distinguish it from every other affection of the febrile kind. The highly accelerated pulse; the mammary secretions being arrested; the quantity and appearance of the lochia being altered; the constipated condition of the bowels; the peculiar character of the alvine discharges; the exemption for the most part from delirium; the loss of maternal feelings &c.; and its always being attended by putridal inflammation; are peculiarities which attend in the but cannot perhaps be enumerated in another febrile disease.

Typical fever under all circumstances is considered a highly dangerous disease and fatal perhaps in the great proportion. It is observed by Dr. Gurney, that "it occasions the death of much the greater portion of those

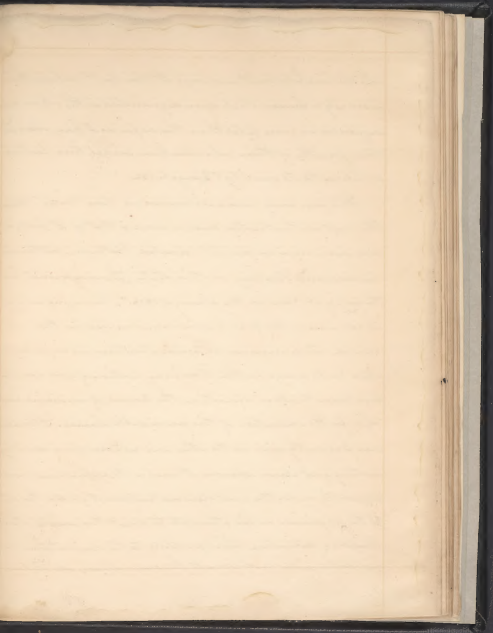
Essay.

By

G. L. Truitt

who die in childhood," and says Dr. Clarke: "perhaps there is scarcely a disease which we are acquainted with, whose consequences are more fatal than this; as far as I have observed three fourths of those who have been seized, have fallen victims to its severity." C. page p. 132.

This form rarely prevails as epidemics in these United States. The most authenticated case on record is that of Dr. Jackson and from him we learn it prevailed, "both in Northern Liberties and Smlburg in this State, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1797 and in the spring of 1798." This infrequency of its recurrence in the form of epidemics, is no evidence that it should not demand our particular attention; for sufficiently often has its ravages on the promising portion of our country been made to call in requisition the powers of medicine and oblige for the eradication of this formidable disease. Sporadic cases frequently occur in the cities and sections of our country exciting great alarm whenever it makes its appearances, and frequently under the most vigorous treatment, elude the art of the physician in his attempts to arrest this unrelenting weapon of destruction, which according to the observations of our distinguished professor - Dr. Leewell - attacks all shapes.

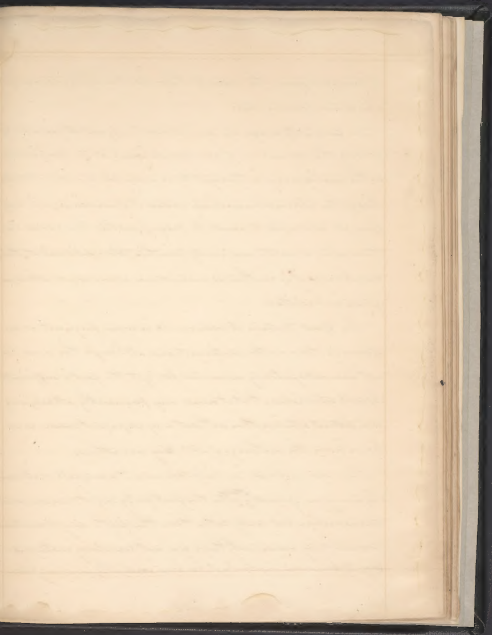


of females, from the poor to those in the higher ranks of
life. *Diurnal of female* p. 369.

In Europe its ravages are sometimes truly awful; especially
among the poorer class of females delivered at the hospitals;
as the malignancy is thought to be increased by some peculiar-
ities of the atmosphere, which render it epidemic, and hap-
pily all attempts to arrest its progress, while the women are
thoroughly cleansed, and nicely painted. When delivered at their
own houses it is neither so violent nor common as when con-
fined in hospitals.

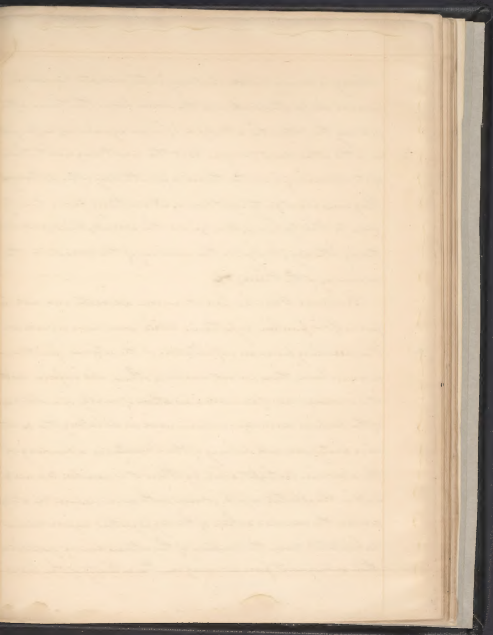
In Great Britain its occurrence is more frequent as an
epidemic, than on the continent; and although the cause has
not been satisfactorily accounted for, yet the fact is sufficiently
well established, that it occurs very frequently, attacking
one district after another without any apparent cause; as we
learn from the writings of Mr. Keay and others.

Females confined in child-bed and the subjects of its con-
comitant, are generally ^{attacked} after the first forty eight hours; some-
times earlier, but rarely later than the fifth day. Variations
however may occur; and there are not wanting instances
(see Dr. Baillie) in which it has been evidently forming before



delivery, or during labour, or at any intermediate period for several weeks afterward; and the sooner from the time after delivery the patient is attacked, if in an equal degree, just or is in the attendant danger. But the most frequent time of its appearing, is on the third or fourth day after delivery. It may last about forty eight hours; increasing from twenty four to thirty hours; chiefly on the second, third, and on the eighth day; less on the evening of the second, or the morning of the third; &c.

Dr. Ferriaroli has had its various advocates and each in favour of his peculiar hypothesis. While some have considered it as proceeding from an inflammation of the uterus, peritonaeum, or omentum; there are not wanting others, who inform us that it is a consequence of an undue secretion of milk; or a stoppage of the lochial discharge; violence used in distending the os uteri; a hasty and rash delivery of the placenta; or a binding of the abdomen too tight; while by others it is ascribed to a weakness in the affected vessels, joined with an increased coagulability, or when the vascular action of the hypogastric region becomes debilitated from the pressure of the uterus during gestation; then subsequent from coming on, the activity of the larger



arteries are increased, the blood is forced in the suppressed vessels, and inflammation is the consequence. In the uterus the vessels are relieved by the lochial discharge; but in the neighbouring organs the circumstances are different and inflammation comes on. To the above other causes have been added, as suppressed perspiration, the neglect of procuring stools at a proper season after delivery, the free use of stimulants, sudden frights, and colds.

In making up our opinions on this subject we are led to conclude, that parturition has no direct agency in the production of puerperal fever, for Dr Armstrong observes, "that it does not seem to depend upon the difficulty of labour, for in most of the women in whom it occurred, parturition was remarkably easy, and the placenta was cast off after a proper interval, and without more than usual pain, nor was the lochial discharge, before the attack, in any way apparently affected." Mr. Hey says, p. 21. "I have scarcely known an instance in my own practice, of this disease coming on after a preternatural labour. It has, on the contrary, most frequently occurred, within the compass of my experience, after the most easy and natural labours." 99





of brown, through the annals of the have their share of evil.
Then, whose heads are of full size and which rest on strong
a surface upon the upper extremity of the brain and conse-
quently, cover the posterior as certain is and so from
superior, inferior, and other, portions of "Cerebrum" some
of females 1852.

From the account of the history of different writers on
this subject, I am led to conclude that, before the brain
on initial agency in the increasing of cerebral power, will
be a sort of a general command, that in various instances, a
very strong, and sometimes more or a less, have the effect of
inducing or inducing towards it various actions existing in
some remote part of the body, as, for example, the
senses of the brain, and external organs, may have the
effect of inducing various actions towards them, and
towards the various portions of the nervous system, as in
the various, in the latter a consideration to have on these
and toward them in relation to various portions of the system
in delivering the various actions, the most important of the
situation into action will predominate and, therefore, even
with the various portions, for says Dr. Brown, "The nervous
• Dr. Clark, Therapeutics, vol. 2, p. 10.







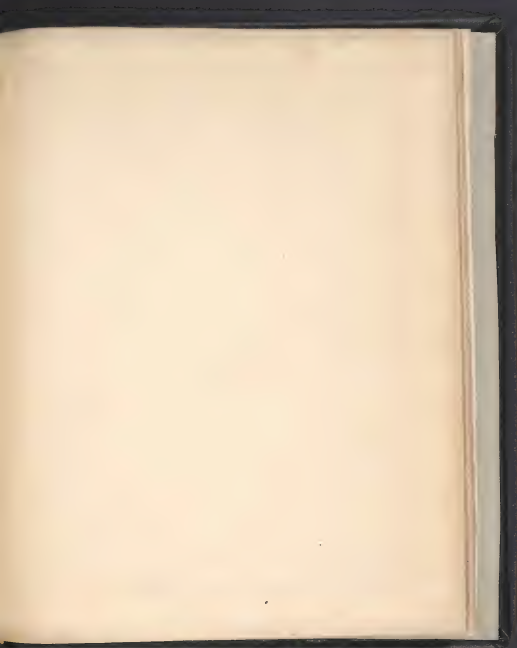


Since the disease is so much deeper, however, and ends
in a more or less permanent, but in some instances, a recovery of
some of the nerves, arising in the same proceeding in the face,
great weakness, and a restless sleep. As the disease advances the
chills become more and more violent, and the patient is restless,
and sometimes complains of vertigo, and a desire to vomit
say, the patient at the same time is very sensible of the weakness;
and as sensation is improved with sight, the patient is be-
ing short and laborious from the weakness against the wind.
The patient does not have much of an affection, the most it
is. The disease is not cured in the early stage, and some-
times increases with age. There is a more violent reaction,
convulsion, or the most part is a tedious perspiration
without remission, the disease is the same. The only
if possible, recovery is diminished, and the last with the
a chronic disease. The disease is more common than
both in the preceding and a large number of the localities
is like, and sometimes (though rarely) is the same. The
disease is mixed with the same, is commonly the same, small in
quantity, and often accompanied with the same. The skin
is not much dry, the pulse is in the disease in general, just





[illegible]







a cold swimming sweat, the face also becoming red or pinkish
flushed with heat, the eyelids, sometimes swollen, heavy and
clashed, and the person is conscious of the existence of the heat
-burn, about the face, and a dry itching, the skin
sometimes is itchy, and there is a constant
sensation of the continuous burning, sometimes of the
surface of the body, the skin is warm, the eyes, closed
are uncomfortable and burning. And when the case
is attended with more or less inflammation of the chest, some-
times with the continuance of cough in the night, it may
be, and is almost certainly, a fatal case where the
lungs have been exposed to the action of the virus, the
result is either a cure or death.

When the respirations became more easy, sleep and when the pulse at the same time diminishing in frequency, with an increase of a more even motion, he became able to be dressed, and to be attended, and was able to get down to see his friends, and to take his usual food, with a slight degree of weakness, and faintness. The unnecessary evacuations were discontinued, and with the return of moderate exerting, the weakness of the limbs, with a violent degree of nausea, and distention



a catarrh; the tongue also is of a white, or of a brown
and slim appearance, becoming clean and moist, and the
stomach at the same time retaining the food and mi-
xing it in the usual manner. In the case of a non-inflammable cat-
tarrh.

[illegible]







[illegible]





which might have some effect in the inflammatory stage. But, these discouraging circumstances we should not disregard, and we should not, but should not totally, resign our efforts, until we have seen the result.

In a disease the progress of humors from a constitution may be considered of the greatest importance in the inflammatory stage. But, we must be careful, if neglected until the system becomes exhausted, we remove the source of supply, and we constantly employ, if not, other means to. The quantity of blood lettings, depends on the quantity of humors, he has retained in the body of the patient, and the violence of the symptoms, always requiring a decisive interference in the system, we remove the force of the circulation, diminishing the violence of the disease, and producing a solution of continuity.

It would have been a great advantage, in the treatment, that the quantity of blood should have been diminished, and the distribution of the system, as in no way relieved, we must wait until the system is in the state of exhaustion, and a solution of continuity will be necessary.



Repeated bleedings ought in general to be avoided. After the first general debility there should be a severe haemorrhage or acute tenderness of the abdomen; without much disturbance, the menstrua at the same time secreted freely or return their periods; and the patient is not desirous of medicinal feeds; the propriety of bloodletting cannot be doubted, and ought to be employed until the pain is considerably abated. It will always be necessary therefore to bleed as early as possible, and even in cases where our attendance has been somewhat interrupted until the stage has considerably advanced; we should when inflammatory symptoms exist deplete blood immediately.

In some cases of this fever where there is extreme debility and a typhoid tendency, general depletion may be unnecessary; this may occur when the pain and tenderness of the abdomen is truly inflammatory; and under these circumstances such a measure may be applied very advantageously to the abdomen. Bloodletting is in no way admissible except in the first stage of purpuric fever, where the inflammatory symptoms are usually well marked, unless in the second
second







decided benefit in the case of hemorrhoids, liver, then it is a
even more of extreme efforts or after having irritability
of the stomach and intestines, the water may be more
obviously, patients may observe great relief to the extent of
easing the liver and intestinal slugs.

In the case of a patient who has great simplicity of taste
must be experienced. It would be better to give a small dose
in the early or active stage. There may be a firm, powerful
temperament strength, but in the case of the nervous system
they require. The system may be irritated or so that
it will be against the power of the system to resist
it. The bowels should not be burdened with irritating an-
tiseptics, but at the same time, it is necessary to remove them
or give stools in the course of a day when they do not set in
naturally, is inadvisable.

Should the irritation of the stomach be great, accompanied
with frequent vomiting, direct a saline draught to be taken
every hour or two, with the frequent employment of mor-
cellaneous liquors, acidulated as desired. Strong coffee
is not so often grateful to the stomach if the consti-
tution be robust, however, and may be given freely. Light re-



gettable - which is associated with subliminal acid: cannot only
and the cause of it, are the solvent richest articles of
nourishment, all which in the various simple & com-
plicated articles being innocuous.

In the third stage and that case is more is to un-
der the solvent as soon possible as circumstances will
admit. Every measure therefore calculated to support the
system will make her tranquil both in body and mind
should be adapted to her immediate assistance. The
highest nursing necessary from medical treatment
being abandoned and the full force of her recovery
will show our only means of retaining the full vigour
of the system to administer stimulants without a
- sense of oppression.

This measure forms the medicinal treatment accord-
ing to the different stages of general power. Independent
of this however, the most important responsibility, with be-
quest as well as medical mutilation, of a apartment
and a moderate temperature not exceeding 60° is necessary.
All other measures as far as possible should be removed from
the system is most important, the nurse should be in



gently washed in warm water, followed by a cloth wet with
brandy or wine, & dried. or the suit and changed for
another. When the air cannot be obtained, cover the
shoulders with warm flannel, and in various
parts of the room. Carefully covered as should be observ-
ed, both as to myself and bedding; All warm, strong, wine,
and spirit should be excluded, & stimulating diet
should be withheld and use consisting of fruit water,
mild aperient water, then cold water, barley tea, & im-
mense wall that may exist.

Great relief is likewise given the superstitious
of the women with some volatile spirit in a warm spi-
rit of turpentine or camphorated spirit, by means of a
sponge, and should be freely indulged in. When there
is more discharge of menses, or to relieve it when absent,
place the child at the breast several times through the
day, so as to procure a violent secretion, which is frequent-
ly, however useful, in as much as a violent secretion of menses
is never attended by hysterical inflammation.

Such are the views I have been constrained to take of
the causes, symptoms, progress, and treatment of Quinse-
al Fever; not from any experience of my own, but as col-
lected from the practice and observations of those authors who
are distinguished for their talent and acuteness of percep-
tion in matters connected with the obstetrical depart-
ment. Presenting it therefore as it necessarily must be im-
perfect— from our limited knowledge of the mysterious work-
ing of the Deity; I shall only add that my greatest desire is,
that I may through perseverance and industry, be ena-
bled to acquit myself satisfactorily before your honourable
board; and in future life prove particularly useful to suf-
fering humanity, and an ornament to the profession which
you so eagerly labour to honour by your constant and un-
wearied searchings into every thing calculated to lessen
misery and place mortals above the reach of hopeless
disease.

